WORLD WAR BRINGS OUT OUR GREAT CONSERVATIVE

Elihu Root, "the Man of Brains," Is Talked of as Presidential Timber That Is Needed in International Affairs.

By GEORGE HENRY PAYNE.

FOR President in 1916—Elihu Root—"the brainiest man in the country"?

With the feeling that the man who must meet Wilson must be a man who can overtop Wilson—with the feeling that the position that the United States occupies toward the world situation is no time for political manipulating or trading or dickering, leaders in the Republican party are concentrating their political gaze on the man who had modestly sat and listened time and time again, in convention or semi-political gathering, when he has been called the "brainiest man in the country," "the country's most intellectual statesman," etc.

During the last week there have been evidences that the demand for Root to lead the party was not confined to any one section of the country. Here and there other names are being mentioned, but almost everywhere there is a recognition of the fact that the usual procession of favorite sons in times like these are as inopoprtune as a parade of the season's debutantes at a three-alarm fire.

"For President in 1916—Elihu Root"—almost all of the Republican state leaders to whom the subject was suggested this week as a theme for discourse were of one opinion: Root himself was the only one who could stop Root from being nominated.

"It's a question as to whether or not I am too old," he is reported to have said, and it is that objection to himself that the distinguished Republicans who are working within the Constitutional Convention are laboring to overcome.

To-day, as Senator Root is making the new constitution for the State of New York—and, make no mistake, he is making it—he is devoting himself to that one task; and until that task is over the men who surround him and are supposed to have influence with him are loath to add in any way to the burdens that he is now carrying.

Up there in that Assembly chamber in Albany, where it has been the curious custom in this state to send the young political cracklings, and in that hall where one has been accustomed to hear the shrill and pitched voices of jejune and beardless Solons pleading passionately for another $5-a-day clerk, the "brains of the state" are making over the state constitution. A very different spectacle the Assembly chamber presents from the days when the legislators are in session, for the men whose voices are raised in debate now are ex-Cabinet ministers, ex-judges, leaders of the bar, etc.

In the room where the Speaker of the Assembly usually sits, just off the rostrum of the chamber, sat, the other night, Elihu Root, ex-United States Senator, ex-Secretary of State, ex-Secretary of War, winner of the Nobel Prize, etc. Outside in the chamber the voices rose and fell—now and then the high pitched voice of Al Smith; the softer tones of Louis Marshall; the clear voice of the leader of the majority, Wickersham, ex-Cabinet Minister; the burry notes of Seth Low—on they battled, making slow progress, but progress they were making, or the soft spoken, low-voiced, apparently indifferent president of the convention would not have been lounging back, his knee up against the desk, listlessly turning a ruler from one side to the other.

So much has been written about the frigid Elihu Root, the Senatorial icicle, the man with no heart as far as interviewers are concerned, that it seems rather a pity to spoil a tradition. Indeed, when it comes to the good, old-fashioned knock-down-and-drag-out interview, the What-do-you-think-of-America kind, that was born with Gerrit Smith in the '50s, it is doubtful if it will really ever number Elihu Root among its victims.

And it is a curious reason that this distinguished and reserved man gives for his long and successful avoidance of the first of journalistic sports—he fears that he talks too much as it is, and he sees in the interview the dreadful possibility of saying more foolish things than he says now without the interviewer's kindly aid.

Foolish things! One wondered as he talked if he had ever said a foolish thing, this man whose threescore and ten years found him, on a summer's night, directing the remaking of a constitution, hardly a wrinkle on his tanned face, the slightest scattering of white in his close-cropped hair, his searching, restless eye marking well undiminished mental vigor.

He talks of many things—interviews and interviewers, the Constitutional Convention, terms are used—of many things—of things of great importance to the nation, too—and through it all there is the man who has understood what Walter Pater called the "aesthetic charm of clear thought."

It is not what you would call fluent, easy talk; with him the word comes by a process of elimination; the expression of an idea is the survival of only those words that are fit and necessary. Once or twice he spoke of international matters. There was anger in his voice and his eyes flashed, but the words still came, careful and chiselled, and duly wedded to his thought, not illegitimate or gaudy companions for the sake of sonority and show.

And then suddenly, in the midst of these silent comments—he was speaking of the days when he played golf—he declared that he had played a "rotten" game.

The shock over—that verbal dissonant gave one the feeling of stepping off into the elevator shaft—one thought that after all it was Senator Root himself who ought to know whether or not that "rotten" was not the exact, the chiselled, the Paterian word for the particular kind of golf he played.

For the humor of his golf still lingered with him, although it is sixteen years since he has played. The art, he declared, lost little when he gave it up on going to Washington to begin his official career.

The humor of Elihu Root is not often the theme of his commentators, and yet his eyes sparkled when he spoke of his father-in-law, that delightful old gentleman, Salem H. Wales, whom the writer had known slightly. The whimsical humor of Mr. Wales brought to the front the most human side of the unknown Elihu Root—and I imagine there are several of them.

Elihu Root, to Whom Eyes Are Turned, in the Nation's Political Crisis.

In the sixteen years of his official life Mr. Root found that all that he felt called on to say to the public he could say through the medium of speeches and public documents. The fact that the interviewer has never been called in to assist in the production or to decorate these expressions is because Mr. Root is basically opposed to that very decoration. One of the things that he admitted was not quite fair was the occasional publication by some magazine or newspaper of a speech delivered some years before, as if it were a production of that week. While careless or superficial readers may sense no difference, a man who chooses words as carefully as Elihu Root knows that more sensitive minds feel the disjointure of words selected at another time, under other conditions and in a different atmosphere, even though the topic be the same and the ideas apparently relevant to a later issue.

To such a mind, it can be readily perceived, political forecasting has no appeal. Even when he was a younger man, and perhaps less impressed with the inevitable sequence of events without any regard for man's most momentous preparations and awesome prognostications, I imagine that he did little prophesying. Some people have written that he is ambitious, but there has never been much evidence of his getting out into the arena for his own personal benefit. To some people he would seem a fatalist—the Law, to the study and exposition of which his life has been given, governs in its inevitable way as much in the selection of candidates as it does in other things.

The mention of his name for the Presidency does not apparently interest Elihu Root very much; certainly it does not and will not stir him to any activity in his own behalf. It is not that he is not appreciative of the honor, his intimate friends say, but because his is not the nature to enter into a scramble for an office. His diffidence may also be explained on the ground that he feels that a younger man could do better, although, as one of the constitutional delegates said, there isn't a more vigorous man in the convention and none more mentally active.

An endeavor to have him discuss the political outlook met with a flat refusal. To his mind the interest in things political, the discussion of political platforms, combinations and candidates, at this hour is not unusual—it is the recurring movement previous to the meeting of the parties that comes every four years. Perhaps there is a little more intensity just now because of the unusual world conditions, but the process is the same, and the forces that control and govern are still the forces that control and govern in quieter and less parlous times.

The work of the convention is the thing that is on his mind now—not national politics. There was no impatience, but there was chilling clarity, when he spoke of the loose way in which the terms "radical" and "conservative" are used. They are in most instances terms of method. The man who proposes a new way of doing a thing dubs those opposed to him "conservative," and is promptly described as "radical" by those he has put in the conservative class. One of the important proposals before the Constitutional Convention has for its object the reforming of court procedure and the lessening of the law's delays, to the end that the poor litigant does not spend his life and his means in adjudication. Such a reform, in the opinion of Senator Root, is radical, but that does not mean that the constitution that will be submitted this fall will be radical.

From the point of view of those who believe in the referendum, the recall, etc., it will be a conservative constitution, and yet those who are carefully watching the process of evolution day by day point out that President Root has placed at the head of the important committees men of the type of Seth Low, Herbert Parsons and Henry L. Stimson, all of whom are liberals—they don't use the word Progressive much in Albany these days.

Will the committee finish on time? It will. And then? The president of the convention shrugged his shoulders, followed by one of the surprises of this interesting talk, for he described himself as a "lazy man," content with thinking about one job at a time.

A "lazy man"—*par exemple!*"

When the convention is over he will go to his country place and on horse and with long walks "freshen up," for he came to the Constitutional Convention almost immediately after two gruelling sessions of Congress, and many all-night debates when the Ship Purchase Bill was before the Senate.

As an ex-Secretary of State, Mr. Root has refrained from making any comments on the international situation. A man who has occupied this position knows that frequently there are facts which do not appear on the surface or in the published statements, and because he does not feel that he is in possession of all the facts, and because he does not wish to appear as criticising those who are trying to do their duty, he has refrained, despite much urging, to comment on the recent events that have stirred the country.

Nevertheless, he feels as keenly as any one the invasion of the country's rights as a neutral nation, it is said. A man who has talked much with him is authority for the statement that the violation of the neutrality of Belgium and the sinking of the Lusitania have moved him profoundly; but he is reluctant to seem an intruder or a seeker after prominence.

If his voice, as far as the public is concerned, is still, his influence is bearing fruit in the work and attitude of others who are not tethered as he is by official proprieties, and traditions, and respect for the men who are laboring under heavy responsibilities.

The man closest to him at Albany is Henry L. Stimson. It has been pointed out that Stimson, speaking unquestionably his own views, would not have made the plea for war preparedness that he did at Carnegie Hall if he had felt that it was not consonant with the views of the chief for whom he has an almost filial devotion.

People who have suggested to Mr. Root interest in a peace propaganda have not found him responsive, not because he is not as fervently hopeful of a speedy peace as any of the so-called peace propagandists, but because he refuses to blink for popular approval and insists on looking the facts squarely in the face. A peace now would be little more than a truce until one or another of the powers felt they were advantageously placed for a reopening of hostilities.

So, too, those who have suggested that this government should take part in the formation of an international police have, to his mind, failed to take a comprehensive view. To police a situation, a district, or a world, carries with it very heavy obligation—if this government were to enter into an international police agreement it would mean that it would have to agree to go to war with whatever power the international police were called on to discipline.

It would also mean that the United States in all probability would be called on to have ready a certain quota of men and ships to take part in these police and disciplining movements. Not an easy question to settle would be which government should furnish the command for these international police. It is difficult to imagine a time when the United States government would be ready and willing to turn over American men and American ships to be used as police against some power with whom it had no quarrel whatsoever.

Some day, when the convention is over, Elihu Root will speak perhaps, for pressure from outside is strong. Nor will it be the expression of chimerical thought, fancifully clothed, nor the hot product of astigmatic idealism that finds peace and panaceas in the sky. It will be the sober thought of the Man of Law who has not been befogged by the rapidity of events, and whose stand will be none the less human because of the belief that nations, as well as men, must follow law—and that such interesting, if not carefully thought out, suggestions as an international police, must first find nations in honored agreement to uphold and abide by the law of nations.

What Is the Secret of the Personality of the Man Who Is the Master Shaper of the Constitutional Convention?

The Coalition Cabinet Defended by a Man Who Knows

That England Is a United England, Stronger, More to the National Point Than Ever, with Lloyd George and Asquith Firm Friends, Despite Twisted Cable Versions and the Manipulations of Lord Northcliffe, Is the Account Rendered by the Head of the Central News Service.

By GEORGE H. WYKES.

RECENT cable and mail despatches from American correspondents in London have conveyed the impression to the minds of many American readers that Britain is living on the edge of a political volcano; that there are grave dissensions in high places in the British government which, at any moment, may throw that volcano into violent eruption, with political and national chaos, military defeat and imperial ruin as its possible if not probable consequences.

Amongst the most entertaining tit-bits of political "news" with which American readers have been regaled during the past few weeks have been the assertion that David Lloyd George, formerly Chancellor of the Exchequer and now Minister of Munitions in the new Coalition Cabinet, is plotting the overthrow of Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, in order that he himself may assume the leadership if not virtually the dictatorship of the government, that a feud exists between Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, and General Sir John French, commander-in-chief of the British forces at the front, which must result in one or the other being cast into outer darkness, that the inclusion of the "treasonable" Sir Edward Carson in the Coalition Cabinet has given mortal offence to the Irish party and the Liberals and that Lloyd George is involved in a movement to smuggle Lord Haldane into the Cabinet in order to facilitate the attainment of his own ambitious ends.

A few days ago a writer in "The New York World," quite seriously discussing the ambitions of the Munitions Minister, said: "That Lloyd George overthrew the Government a few weeks ago, and incidentally irretrievably damaged the standing of Lord Kitchener to such an extent that any danger from him in a future dictatorship has been removed, seems to be unquestionable.

"He is playing the same game in 1915 that Joseph Chamberlain played in 1902. Chamberlain did not get the political measures he fought for. But he got power, stepping upward over the political corpses of his enemies. The thousand-fold more despised Lloyd George seems to be making a desperate strike to seize the mantle of supreme authority."

It is perfectly amazing that there can be found gentlemen, skilled in the art of writing, and newspapers, presumably desirous of providing real information for the reading public, capable of attempting to impose upon human credulity with such obvious twaddle as the foregoing.

As a matter of fact all these stories alleging serious and dangerous political dissensions in Britain are based upon the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence—and circumstantial evidence at its best is notoriously untrustworthy. "All political centres are schools for scandal, and no legislative body in the world is more so than the British House of Commons." I quote from a trenchant article by T. P. O'Connor, the well known Irish Nationalist, concerning the crop of silly rumors and reports that sprang up anent the formation of the British Coalition Cabinet. "Never was there such an opportunity for the revelation of the elementary and inevitable parliamentary tendencies as that afforded during the weeks which followed immediately upon the creation of the Coalition Government," says Mr. O'Connor. "In addition to all other features making for disquieting and cynical rumors there were a number of men displaced—men of disappointed hopes and strong party men honestly regarding the future of their political ideals. From all these factors there grew up a great legend of Lloyd George and an intrigue to displace Asquith and put the brilliant Welshman in his place. The rumor advanced into the region of propheey, manufacturing a brilliant future for Lloyd George.

"No man was more exasperated or distressed by these ingenious rumors than Lloyd George himself, for he has an intense affection for Asquith and feels a gratitude for the consistent support which Asquith gave him even in the dark hours of the Marconi scandal."

It is, of course, not sufficient airily to wave aside, as "rot" and "bunkum," these persistent rumors of ominous discords amongst men who are now in charge of the destinies of the British Empire. One of the chief arguments that might be advanced in support of the theory that the rumors must have some solid foundation is that the British censorship assuredly would have been careful to prevent their dissemination abroad if there had been nothing in them. At first sight this argument appears a sound one, but will it bear investigation? The British censorship bureau may have been guilty of many colossal stupidities since the war began, but with all its faults I cannot conceive of the British censorship being so unutterably stupid as to stand in the way of the enemy obtaining all the "comfort and encouragement" possible from these stories of British political discord, which had their genesis in the insatiable craving for limelight sensationalism possessed by the owner and director of a number of English newspapers, so utterly lacking in common sense and patriotism as to attempt, in the midst of a grave national crisis, to stir up a political storm, boldly pitting himself against one of the most powerful British ministries of modern times and attempting to bring about the overthrow of a soldier who has won the greatest possible hold on the popular imagination of British people.

Happily the efforts of Lord Northcliffe to bring about a political revolution and in the ensuing chaos to seize for himself the powers of a modern Warwick have recoiled upon his own head, and henceforth the political influence of this "frenzied office boy" and his papers is likely to be more or less of a negligible quantity.

"It seems to me"—I again quote from T. P. O'Connor, whose knowledge of public men in England is perhaps unrivalled—"that the real difficulty is that Lord Northcliffe has no particular gifts and training for the great position the proprietor of so many organs of appeal should enjoy. He has not that foundation in university education which supplies a man with a consistent political creed. The result is that he changes ground often, being usually the creature of what he considers the popular instinct of the hour."

But enough of Lord Northcliffe and the stories of grave political discord to which the diatribes of his journals gave birth.

It remains to be shown that Britain to-day is more politically united, better organized, more deeply imbued with a firm and solemn determination to "see this thing through" than ever before in its history—and this is as clearly demonstrable by incontestable facts as a proposition in Euclid.

Not since the first day of the war has there been any political discord calculated to lessen or even impair British determination in regard to the vigorous prosecution of the war, and since the formation of the Coalition Government all traces of dissension have disappeared. One of the most eloquent and convincing proofs of this is afforded by the fact that three weeks ago when Premier Asquith opened the debate on the new war credit of £250,000,000 sterling John Dillon, formerly one of the most irreconcilable of Irish Nationalists, took advantage of the opportunity to announce that much as he and every member of the Irish party objected to the disappearance of the old ministry and the creation of the new—especially Sir Edward Carson as one of its members—the entire Irish party was determined to give the ministry its full support in carrying the war to a successful issue.

What greater proof of the unity and the determined temper of the British people could be adduced than that furnished by the news which came over the cables a few days ago to the effect that within the space of a very few days the new 4½ per cent British war loan had attracted subscriptions to the extent of no less than $3,000,000,000—far and away the biggest loan raised in the history of the world for any purpose?

And this is not the only world's record achieved by the British nation since the outbreak of this world's war. In August, 1914, Britain was, in the truest sense of the word, a peaceful democracy wholly unprepared and unorganized for war. In the intervening eleven months the British Empire has raised, by voluntary methods, and trained and equipped an army not far short of 3,000,000 men, and this notwithstanding the fact that England's agreement with the other entente powers called for no more than six divisions—120,000 men.

In the current number of the "Contemporary Review" the Hon. C. F. Masterman pays an eloquent tribute to the spirit with which the British nation voluntarily responded to Lord Kitchener's call for men. "The idea of raising even half a million men for foreign service had not occurred to us this time last year," he says. "But no sooner was the demand made during the fateful days of last August than the response was overwhelming. In a day began that gigantic flood of those who were willing to fight for England. In a week the flower of British manhood was literally fighting its way into the recruiting stations. They came in at the rate of 20,000 and even 30,000 a day. They broke down all conceivable preparations which could be made for their reception or equipment. The whole manhood of the country seemed determined to go to the war overseas. Whole industries, and those of vital importance, were denuded of their best workers. The half million doubled and then doubled again. The most wonderful army the world has ever seen came into being; some 3,000,000 of them, all in the prime of manhood, all having chosen to serve, not merely for the protection of their homes, but in foreign lands, in a cause which they believed to be just."

During the past four or five months there has been an almost miraculous transformation of the industrial organizations of the kingdom with the result that to-day there is no question of any shortage of ammunition of any description or of any lack of equipment for the armies at the front or ready to be sent to the front. Under the supervision of the Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George, who is almost as popular a British idol as Lord Kitchener himself, an immense army of skilled workers has been enrolled—voluntarily—to man to their fullest possible capacity the many hundreds of factories now wholly devoted to the manufacture of guns, ammunition and other essential war supplies and there is no longer the least misgiving concerning the adequacy of the output of war material of every description.

Since its creation, a few weeks ago, the Coalition government has passed a munitions of war act which confers remarkable and extraordinary powers in the direction of the compulsory settlement of labor differences, the suspension of trade union rules and other provisions for ensuring the efficient manufacture, transport and supply of war munitions. And now the British parliament is debating, with every prospect of success, the adoption of a bill for establishing a National Register, which requires all British citizens between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five, without distinction of sex, to state (1) their age, (2) the nature of their employment and (3) whether they are willing to "volunteer for any special form of labor with which they are specially acquainted other than that in which they are engaged." This National Register bill has been freely described as the logical prelude to conscription, but, be that as it may, it has not deterred the government from pressing the bill forward towards speedy enactment.

These things can scarcely be regarded as bearing out the idea of an insecure government doubtful of the support of the nation. As a matter of fact the National Register bill has been hailed with almost universal satisfaction. The London "Daily Telegraph" truly mirrored the real spirit of the British people a few days ago when it declared, apropos of the National Register bill, "The government have the nation behind them; let them lead on!"

Ramsay Macdonald, one of the most powerful labor leaders in England to-day, was asked by an American correspondent a day or two ago whether, in the event of the government deeming conscription necessary, the labor unions would oppose it to the extent of declaring a national strike. "Emphatically no," was Mr. Macdonald's reply. "British labor

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